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ABSTRACT

The ideolcgy of a feminine role is instrumental in maintaining the present economic structure that limits women's participation in the labor market. Women face special problems in their career development due to the socialization that prepares them mainly for homemaking, and a job market that continues to discriminate against them. A review of the literature examines how vocational counseling participates with the larger society in promoting limited work role functions for women. Recent developments of theories and tools attempt to diminish sex bias in vocational counseling. A review of research findings suggests that there can be a better understanding of the process of career development for women. Counselors are encouraged to draw on the cumulative data on women to develop an approach that will better address itself to the special career and life planning issues encountered by women. A model is offered which outlines the causal relationship among various factors associated with obstacles to women's career development, and which can serve as a theoretical framework from which a systematic approach to counseling women can be developed. (Author)

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WARNING: VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING CAN BE DETRIMENTAL TO WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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> "To correct the current collapse of family life in Canada, mothers in industry should have their wages slashed in half and specific honors should be paid to mothers who prefer the hearthstone duties."

This statement, made by Reverend Frank Lawson in the Waterloo region in 1943 (Nielson, 1944), expresses the pervasive ideology of our society. The model role for women is homemaker; vocational participation constitutes departure from this role (Zytowski, 1969). This theme that women's place is in the home is vocalized today without embarrassment by individuals in powerful positions. As in the past this perspective continues to be surrounded by implications that women who take their careers seriously cause the breakdown of the family unit and are responsible for the increase in deliquency rates (Birch, 1977). Such unsubstantiated opinions have proved to be a powerful control over women's lives and have provided the raison d'etre for routing women to ghetto jobs in the labour market. Even though it is now unlawful to hire and promote workers using sex as a discriminant and to promote the differential economic treatment of women, the practise still persists.

Socialized by this calculated adherence to the notion of proper and limited role function for women and faced with restricted economic and career opportunities, it is not surprising that women are thwarted in their career development.

Does vocational counselling function to maintain sex segregation in the labour market or is it a catalyst that assists women to explore beyond these restrictions? Is it possible that career counsellors responsible for assisting individuals in career exploration may unwittingly participate in limiting women's career options?

Vocational theories, counsellor attitudes, vocational tools, and the counselling process are the variables of vocational counselling being examined for sex bias. The findings from this ongoing examination and the results of the ever increasing research on women underline directions for more helpful career counselling of women.

A review of the literature shows that counsellor bias and tools utilized in the counselling process limit the career alternatives of women clients. Counsellors take on an influential role when students request their assistance. Their biases or lack of acknowledgment of the special issues surrounding career planning by women negatively affect women's career development.

Shack (1973) reports from an interview with Ontario counsellors:

> "How do you counsel a girl like the youngster in my grade 9 class who wanted to be a doctor (or a nurse if she couldn't be a doctor)? What kind of advice do you give her?"
>
> Said one, "I never tell anyone what she should be. I just give her the pros and cons and the options that are open to her. I'd honestly have to tell her how tough the medical courses are. She should know that cards are stacked against her as a woman -- the number of places open, her loneliness in what is still a men's faculty, the high cost, and the difficulty she'll have getting summer jobs to see her through -- much harder for her than for the men; not as many choices. I wouldn't discourage her, but she's entitled to know what she faces. And if I don't think her chances of making it are good, and she's already thinking about nursing as an option -- I don't know, but I might sort of encourage her in that direction. Her chances would be better, you know."
>
> "Had the counsellors invited successful professional women in to talk to their girls in classes?"
>
> "No, not really", The career women who had spoken were nurses, dental hygienists, office workers, women who were filling women's jobs. (p. 65-66).

Ahrons (1976) found that career goals for women were perceived by counsellors as being incompatible with the role of wife and mother. Donahue and Costar (1977) asked 300 randomly selected counsellors to comment on six short case studies that could describe a male or a female. When the case study described a female, the counsellors chose occupations that paid less, required less pre-requisite education and were more closely supervised than when the same case study described a male. Bingham and House (1973) reported that some counsellors are uninformed about women in the labour market and hold myths about women's general ability and types of jobs they can perform. Counsellors were under attack also for their lack of response to the problem women face in their career planning. Patterson (1973) writes: "Counsellors do not confront the issues of sex identity and vocational identity as an interrelated package. Therefore, they fail to deal with

with the intrapsychic conflict experienced by the female client. Counsellors do not face job discrimination and do not prepare female clients to meet the challenge of finding career satisfaction". Karman (1973) found that women students considering the pursuit of male dominated careers seek the advice of faculty more so than of counsellors; women planning traditional careers go to counsellors more often. She suggests that counsellors are ineffective in helping women into non-traditional fields.

Career counselling tools can be sex biased. Most career material stereotypes the occupations of men and women (Heshusius-Gilsdorlf and Gilsdorlf, 1976). Vetter (1975) found that women and minorities are severely underrepresented. Women are depicted as smiling while men appear to be absorbed in serious business. Women are seldom pictured outdoors or involved in activity but are frequently pictured as career representatives for service occupations. She suggests that career material should not only represent todays occupational trends, but focus more on future career expectations, since young people use the material to prepare for the future. It is projected that women will participate in the labour force in greater numbers and will enter a variety of occupations in large numbers. Career material should reflect this expected change.

The interest inventory, too often the central focus of much of vocational counselling, is being scrutinized. A lively and strong controversy in the literature raises doubts about these current measurements for assessing a person's vocational interest. The great concern with predictive validity at the expense of maintaining sex restrictive instruments is being questioned. Evidence of sex restrictiveness are the use of different occupational scales for males and females and the unequal distribution of career options suggested by basic interest scales (Prediger and Hanson, 1976 and Title, 1978). Of the commonly used instruments that are receiving much attention, are the SDS (Self-Directed Search) and the Strong-Campbell: the SDS, because of its use of raw scores rather than standard scores (Prediger and Hanson 1976, Holland 1976, Gottfredson, Holland and Gottfredson, 1976); and the Strong-Campbell for the use of separate occupational scales for men and women. (Campbell, 1976).

While this controversy continues, encouraging results were reported by Prediger, Hanson and Rayman (1976). Studies of the newly developed Uni-Sex Interest Inventory (UNI II) and the American College Testing Interest Inventory (ACT IV) contain sex balanced items and support the construct validity of sex balanced scales. Of the two, the UNI II proved superior in sex balanced items and sex balanced scales (Hanson and Raymond, 1976).

Disenchanted with the traditional testing approaches to vocational counselling and its limiting effects on women, Dewey (1974) developed the Non-Sexist Vocational Card Sort. When this approach was compared with the Strong-Campbell, the Vocational Card Sort was found more effective in broadening career options, especially in non-traditional fields, and in increasing the frequency with which subjects read occupational information (Cooper, 1976).

Whether the existing theories of vocational development are very serviceable when applied to understanding women's careers is also being questioned in the literature. The present theories do not shed light on the process of integration of women's often conflicting roles (Zytowski, 1969) and do not reflect the common interruption of women's careers due to marriage and family (Kosh and Grimm, 1976). Because some of the major theories, i.e., by Super, Ginzberg, and Holland have been tested mainly on men, their applicability to women remains unvalidated. (Osipow, 1968). Jordaan (1977) reports that while some writers support the development of a separate theory for women, others suggest that it may be possible to revise and expand the existing theories. Holland has suggested a modified classification of his career typology theory that would then apply to women: intellectual, social intellectual, social conventional, social enterprising, social artistic, conventional and artistic (Holland and Whitney, 1968). Jerdee and Rosen (1976) have provided two models illustrating two very different ways career development in women can occur: In the sexist

model, women are socialized toward female careers, they experience tension between marriage and career, they then sacrifice long range career development for the sake of husbands and children and settle into a compromise job with low commitment. In the idealized model, women's interests and capacities develop without social constraints. During the exploration stage, women focus their interests into general career orientation and develop career related abilities. They then choose a career and integrate this with family interests, with the result that they develop career competence and dual commitment to career and family.

The argument has been raised that the purpose of vocational counselling is merely to reflect to the individual that person's history. Dismissed in this thinking is consideration for the individual's untested interests, untapped potential, conflicting role notions, unchallenged assumptions, never entertained possibilities and fear of discrimination. Because women differ in the degree to which they adhere to the feminine role, they differ in their career orientation. Sex role seems to be a powerful variable in their career decisions and counsellors promote the effects of this sex role socialization when they dissuade women from exploring jobs that men do, when without cautions and variation use tools and theories intended for men, or when they ignore the powerful limiting factor of socialization on women's career planning. Counsellors must go beyond women's history.

> "Women like all groups whose vocational development has been arrested, need special help in stretching, in raising aspiration level... women should be helped to free themselves to dream.. The goal is to develop human beings who are free to act in ways that are appropriate to their interests and their values....not sex."
> Schlossberg(1972)

In order to assist women to develop satisfying career plans, it is necessary to understand the psychology and influences operating in their career choices and the individual differences among women. The accumulating data on women encourages the work of those interested in developing career theories applicable to women. While this theorization goes on, it certainly is possible to involve the results of much of the research on women in our counselling practice.

The findings do reveal distinct differences operating in the career development of women and men that must be accounted for in our practice. Following is a summary of these results organize under four topics: Obstacles to women's career development; individual differences among women; career readiness; women's changing role.

* OBSTACLES TO THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN

At the start of this paper, the point was made that career barriers for women stem from the dominant ideology of the proper feminine role (Alper 1974, Boutilier, 1977, Entwistle, 1972.)

These barriers surface for the individual woman both from herself and from her environment. Within herself, a woman might experience fear of success (Monohan, Kuhan, & Shaver, 1974, Horner, 1968, Kimball, 1973, Katz, 1972), lack of confidence in her abilities because she is female (Tomlison-Keasey, 1974, Coopersmiths, 1967), conflict between marriage and career, between raising children and working, between her career and that of her husband (Farmer & Bonn, 1970). She may see as proper for her only jobs in which women predominate, thus limiting her job choices to a handful of occupations (Crawford, 1978). She may live her ambitions through others, i.e., husband, children, boss (Lipman & Blumen, 1972), by directing her energies to promoting and supporting their career development. A woman wishing to work may experience certain barriers from her environment: disapproval, discrimination (Hitchman, 1976, Birk and Tanley, 1973), limited exposure and preparation for the world of work (McLure and Piel, 1978). In the work force she will most likely not encounter mentors, "old boys networks", and role models (McLure and Piel, 1978, those guides that greatly assist men's career development. Even as students, women

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* This section was further developed from the work of Farmer, (1976).

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

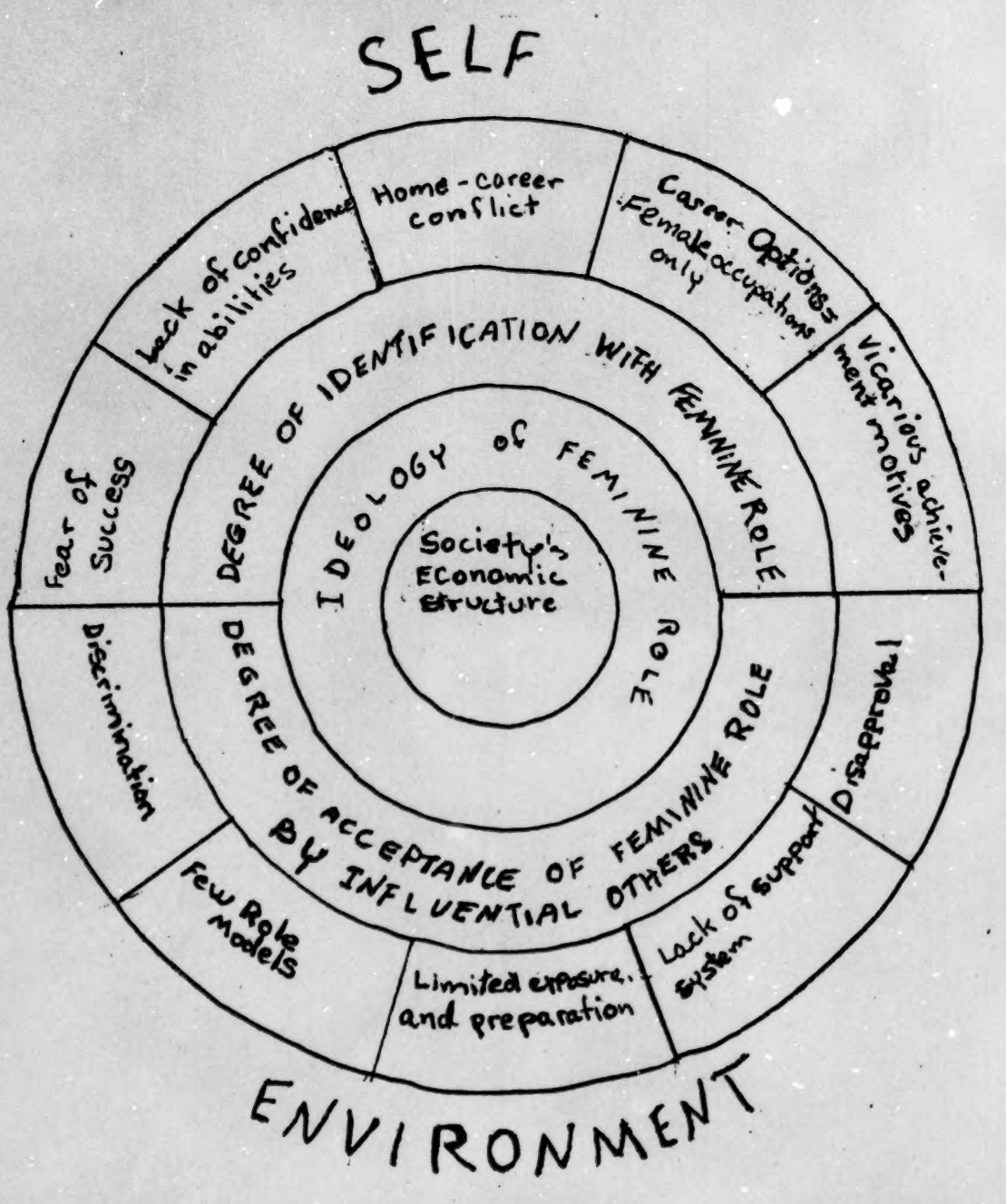

Figure B

compete with men from a disadvantaged position. In eleven departments of two Canadian graduate schools, Hitchman (1976) reports that women encountered status contradiction, perceived and experienced discriminatory treatment, and suffered more stress than men.

In times of high unemployment, women experience great setbacks: tolerance for women's career participation fades, and women's-place-is-in-the-home sermons are revived. It is important to perceive that the feminine ideology functions to maintain the existing economic structure and a restructuring of this system must take place before government and business forces will be willing to let the feminine role myth be buried (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978).

Figure B summarizes the factors associated with women's career obstacles. It illustrates economics as the base supporter of the ideology of femininity. It states that for a woman the degree of identification with this role and the degree that influential others promote this role correlates positively to the degree that a woman experiences self barriers and the more quickly she will be subdued by environmental blocks. If an individual does not try to fit into a stereotype, doesn't believe it's necessary for her to do so, and influential others support the growth of her individuality, then she will be psychologically more flexible to meet her needs, desires, and ambitions regardless of general social pressures. Her energy can be directed more fully toward resolving the environmental blocks she faces.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Because women differ in the degree to which they adhere to the feminine role, they differ in their career orientation. In addition to women's attitudes toward their role, attitudes of significant others, especially mothers and the need to affiliate were identified by Rossander (1978) as important variables affecting women's career orientation. A common method for examining women's career orientation divides women into three categories similar to what Rossi (1965) called:

1. Pioneers: women whose long range career goals are in predominately masculine fields.
2. Traditional: women whose long range career goals are in fields in which women predominate: elementary teaching, nursing, library, home economist.
3. Homemakers: no career goals other than being housewives.

Most of the research that I came across described pioneers as compared to traditional women. The bulk of these findings seem to suppor model B which was previously presented. A summary follows.

VARIABLES IN THE CAREER ORIENTATION OF PIONEER WOMEN WHEN COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL WOMEN

Pioneers:

Attitudes toward Sex roles

1. Tended to have liberal views of women's role in society, engaged in less stereotyping and thus had less restrictive choices in their vocational goals. (Karmon, 1973, Lawlis and Crawford, 1975, Moore and Veres, 1976, Crawford, 1978).

2. Have developed a stronger self-concept that allows them to adjust to playing two or more roles. (Lawlis and Crawford, 1975).

Educational Performance

3. Were high achievers and maintained higher academic records. (de Wolf, 1976, Karmon, 1973).

4. Were more theoretically oriented (analytical, logical). (Karmon, 1973).

5. Planned graduate study more often. (Moore and Veres, 1976, de Wolf, 1976).

Family Background

6. Came from high income homes. (Karmon, 1973).

7. Had mothers who reached high levels of education and were working. (Karmon, 1973, Crawford, 1978).

8. Have mothers who were less educated and non-working. (Crawford, 1978).

9. Had adjacent siblings who were most likely to be males. (Crawford, 1978).

Marriage and Family Plans

10. Were less likely to plan marriage before completing their education and also more likely never to marry. (Moore and Veres, 1976).

11. Planned for fewer children (one or two) and some planned for no children. (Moore and Veres, 1976).

WOMEN'S CAREER READINESS

It is possible that many college and university age women may not be ready to make career decisions until later in their lives. Because of romantic notions of family life, Rossi, (1965), suggests college freshman are still far from the reality of marriage to believe that it will or should fulfil women completely, a view that will be modified as they experience marriage and children. She reports on the age single homemakers and married women believe a child should be before the mother takes a part-time job: only 16% of the single homemakers say under five years of age, but fully 35% of the married homemakers approve maternal employment when a child is a pre-schooler. Single homemakers wanted larger size families than married homemakers. Harmon (1970) reports that career commitment seems to be aroused in later life (30-35) in women. Jerdee's and Rosen's (1976) survey of 104 employed women disclosed that while half of the respondents indicated high level of aspiration, only 12% traced their current high level to high school days and earlier. Work and marriage experiences appeared to stir women's desire to work.

WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLES

The majority of women in higher education plan for a traditional career. (Moore and Veres, 1976). Yet changes in women's career orientation have been noted. Sherman and Jones (1976) compared women at the same university in 1959 and 1974. They report a strong shift. Half as many women see themselves in the role of service to others with greater emphasis on personal career development. Increased value was placed on independence, advancement, income and self-improvement. There was an increase in economic realistic considerations, and a decrease in satisfaction derived from employment. In 1974, women showed interest in becoming economically self-supporting and entering fields previously dominated by men. Those indicated were accounting, business, law, and medicine. Occupations also included oceanography, veterinary medicine, dentistry, landscape architect, computer programmer and horticulture.

CONCLUSION

This foregoing review of the literature suggests ways that vocational counselling can promote women's career development. Counsellors who hold biased opinions and attitudes about women's abilities and place in the labour market ought not to work with this group. Counsellors must assist women to consider broad occupational options, to resolve internal conflicts, to explore the reality of their fears, and to develop strategies with which to encounter imposed restrictions. Counsellors can correct assumptions that female clients might have by providing them with information regarding women's participation in the world of work, examples of varied lifestyles of women, and research on the effects working mothers have on children. Women's career groups have been found effective. These should focus on women's roles (Podell, 1977), assertiveness training (Pocle, 1977), dialogues with career women (Vincezi, 1977) and opportunities to practice non-traditional activities. Female support groups can be of great help to women who are breaking into male-dominated school departments and occupations.

In summary, I see the socialization of women and the sex biased labour market as truncating women's career development. It is apparent that career counselling may be less than helpful to women. Yet career counselling is a potentially powerful process that can assist women, even if economic forces set against equal opportunity continue. By incorporating the data now available, counsellors need to develop an approach that is applicable to women. We can no longer pretend that the tools and structures set up to counsel men are effective in counselling women.

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